

European *Social* dialogue

European Commission Delegation

Newsletter from the European Commission – Employment and Social Affairs DG/D – December 2000

No. 16

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2300 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

MAR 29 2001

Industrial relations & industrial change

Editorial

The new "employment package" which includes the joint report on employment, the guidelines for 2001 and the recommendations to the Member States is the first to be adopted since the Lisbon European Council.

The approach of the 2001 guidelines strikes the right balance between the need to take forward the Luxembourg strategy and to achieve the new objectives set by the Lisbon European Council. In this framework, the role of the social partners is further strengthened. They are invited to negotiate and implement, at all levels, agreements designed to modernise the organisation of work, including flexible forms of work. There are many subjects to be tackled, including the introduction of new technologies, new forms of work (including telework) and questions linked to working time.

The social partners are also invited to implement actions to increase levels of skills and qualifications within companies as a key element in lifelong learning.

Lastly, they are encouraged to develop their own processes in regard to the guideline priorities, reporting regularly on the progress made and the impact of their actions on employment and the functioning of the labour market.

A new field is therefore open to the social partners, of which the compendium of good employment practices compiled by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC is an initial example. The compendium's introductory statement, adopted at the last meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee in Paris, on 21 November, looks ahead to the next summit in Stockholm, expressing the desire to hold an annual meeting prior to each spring European Council. This would enable the social partners to assess progress made in implementing the strategy for growth and full employment as defined in Lisbon and to make their contribution to it.

Odile Quintin
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Main story

Agency work: launch of a European sectoral social dialogue

At the very first meeting of the sectoral dialogue committee for agency work, on 3 July 2000, UNI-Europa, representing the workers, and Euro-CIETT, representing the temporary work agencies, adopted a joint declaration on the start of their social dialogue at European level.

In this declaration, in which they warmly welcome the launch of their European sectoral social dialogue, Euro-CIETT and UNI-Europa first formally recognise each other as representative organisations in the sector. They also express the shared hope that the sectoral social dialogue will have positive effects on this important industry and will benefit all the parties involved in Europe – employees, the agencies and user enterprises.

As to the content of sectoral social dialogue, the social partners believe it should deal with paid agency-supplied workers. On the basis that agency work has the potential to play a positive role in the labour market, the sectoral social dialogue should work towards improving the quality and the operation of the European labour market, the employment and working conditions of agency-supplied workers, and further sector professionalisation.

The situation in the sector has changed over recent years. A number of factors have played a role in this development: the ongoing progress of the industry in many EU Member States has widened the scope of the services the sector provides and has increased the contribution the industry makes to the economy and the labour market; social partners have negotiated and signed collective agreements in many countries with the aim of regulating and improving working conditions for agency-supplied workers; in 1997 the ILO adopted a Convention on private employment agencies (Convention 181) in which it recognised the role that private employment agencies can play in well-functioning labour markets and the need for protection for workers; several Member States have adopted legislation modifying their national legal frameworks with the result that there is no longer an outright prohibition on agency work in any EU Member State.

UNI-Europa and Euro-CIETT have expressed their support for the current negotiations between UNICE-CEEP and ETUC with a view to a European-wide framework legislation and their intention to play an active role in their progress.

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Employment & social affairs



European Commission

Open Forum

Annick Malengreau,
social affairs manager
with EURATEX



With its 20 national associations and its branch associations, EURATEX, the European organisation for textiles and clothing, represents an industrial sector of some 120,000 companies and 2,300,000 workers.

Developing a responsible social dialogue

EURATEX represents the textiles and clothing sector in the EU as well as in a growing number of European countries outside the Union. The sector is dominated by SMEs, many of them very small businesses with an average number of workers per company of just 19 in 1999.

Restructuring over recent decades has led to major job losses, with an often traumatic effect on certain regions which are very dependent on textiles and clothing. Some regions are now seeing renewed growth in employment, especially in the production of technical textiles which, although largely unknown to the general public, are of increasing value for the sector's future in the EU.

Sectoral social dialogue began in 1992 as a result of the desire of European sectoral organisations representing employers and workers to restore confidence in the EU's textiles and clothing sector.

European sectoral social dialogue is a long-term process. On the one hand, the very different national traditions in industrial relations do not always make it easy to get the social partners from all the Member States to sit down at the table together. On the other hand, the need to respect the principle of subsidiarity does not always make it easy to choose the subjects for discussion. Finally, EURATEX has embarked upon a process of European social dialogue and not

a process of European collective bargaining. The national EURATEX members continue to give priority to the national and company level, in particular when it comes to setting wages and working conditions. Sectoral social dialogue in the textiles and clothing sector has to date scored two successes. It has enabled the social partners to arrive at joint positions on many sectoral issues, both in the social field and on subjects of industrial or commercial policy - joint positions which have made it possible to give the sector a voice in dealing with the national and European authorities. Also, a number of studies of concrete projects, in particular in the field of vocational training and equal opportunities, have provided the sector's firms and workers with real tools with which to help improve human resources management and the sector's image.

EURATEX will continue to assume its responsibilities in the social field and to make a concrete contribution to the new coordinated strategy for employment. Vocational training, the coordinated reduction of indirect wage costs (social charges) and the promotion of a socially responsible production (see the code of practice signed by the social partners on 22 September 1997) will be priority issues for the sectoral social dialogue committee for the European textiles and clothing sector.

Inter-sectoral

Meeting of the Social Dialogue Committee

The meeting of 4 October was devoted to the employment package and its follow-up as well as the implementation of the joint declaration of the social partners of 15 June.

The employment package was welcomed by the ETUC, UNICE and CEEP social partners. They adopted their compendium of good practices in employment which they undertook to complete within the next few days. They also decided to

pursue follow-up activities, including an interim progress report. The "labour market" group will oversee this follow-up.

There have been a number of developments in connection with implementation of the 15 June joint declaration: the macro-economic group met on 7 November to discuss the economic forecasts for the autumn; a joint contribution calling for the implementation of an observatory on change within the Dublin foundation is in the process of being adopted by the social partners; the first meeting of the "training" group was held on 31 October with the aim of identifying ways of promoting lifelong

access to training and the development of the skills and qualifications necessary for companies and employees. Finally, the meeting of the telework group of 13 November was an additional rather than alternative step in the first stage of current consultation on the basis of Article 138.2 of the Treaty on the modernisation of work organisation.

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Sectoral

Agriculture

At the meeting of their Health and Safety Working Group on 16 October 2000, the European social partners in the agricultural sector adopted the text of two safety manuals.

The first text describes safety procedures in the forestry industry. The second text deals with the safety procedures which apply to spray operators. Both texts have a European perspective and are based on the respective EU directives in force.

The social partners have decided to publish the papers online in all Community languages. They will be available on the homepages of GEOPA/COPA (<http://www.copa.be>) and EFA (<http://www.efa-ecf.org>) as well as at the Employment and Social Affairs DG website (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-dial/social/index_en.htm).

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Banks

The European social partners of the banking industry have launched a major cooperation project with their member organisations in Central and Eastern Europe. As a first step they are organising three round tables: on 9-10 November 2000 in Budapest, on 4-5 December 2000 in Prague, and early in 2001 in Warsaw.

The round tables are aimed at providing an exchange of information on the state of the social dialogue in the respective applicant

countries, on major developments in sectoral dialogue in European banking, on the industrial relations systems and the social dimension of the EU as well as on the main trends in the banking industry in the host country.

The European social partners have also launched a study on IT employability in the banking sector. During the first phase human resources managers and trade union representatives from a representative sample of banks in the Member States will be asked to provide information on IT investments and change in work organisation, HR strategies for IT-related skills as well as on measures to cope with IT skills shortages and to increase employability.

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Cleaning industry

The social partners in the industrial cleaning sector, EFCI for the employers and UNI-Europa for the workers, have reached agreement to work together on a number of important issues for the sector.

At the last meeting of the social dialogue committee, on 2 October 2000, the social partners adopted a joint declaration on a number of key aspects of the industrial cleaning sector in Europe.

EFCI and UNI-Europa want to promote a positive image for the sector, at European, national and local level. The social partners believe that a number of factors can be an obstacle to the harmonious development of the sector's activities and that the perceived reputation can have major economic and social consequences for employers and workers.

Judging from the results of a survey carried out in 1999 on sub-contracting, sham self-employed workers, public contracts, undeclared work and equal opportunities, the social partners believe it is now necessary to carry out systematic and thematic studies to obtain elements which would enable them to submit concrete recommendations (addressed to the players concerned) and thus avoid the negative effects of some of these factors.

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Electricity

The social partners in the electricity sector met on 11 October 2000 to discuss a recent study on the employment effects of liberalisation of the internal electricity market.

The findings of the study focused on factors impacting on employment in the sector, such as new business orientations, new skills needs and changes in job profiles.

At the meeting, the social partners discussed a joint declaration on the social implications of the internal electricity market, including a commitment to joint action.

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Civil aviation

On 17 October, the Council reached political agreement on the directive which implements the European agreement on working time for mobile workers in the civil aviation sector. This is the fifth directive adopted in accordance with the procedure foreseen in Article 139.2 of the Treaty.

The agreement lays down minimum working time requirements for mobile staff in civil aviation. In particular, it limits annual working time to 2,000 hours, provides for four weeks' annual leave, contains a 900-hour limit on annual flying time and provides for monthly and yearly minimum numbers of rest days. The agreement ensures 'appropriate' health and safety protection for all mobile personnel in the sector.

The organisations representing management and labour at European level - the Association of European Airlines (AEA), the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the European Cockpit Association (ECA), the

European Regions Airline Association (ERA) and the International Air Carrier Association (IACA) - concluded a European agreement on the organisation of working time for mobile staff in civil aviation on 22 March 2000. It therefore took just seven months for the Council to adopt the agreement.

The directive introduces "more specific requirements concerning certain occupations or occupational activities" as provided for in Article 14 of the 1993 working time directive. When this directive (and consequently the agreement) enter into force, it is the agreement that will govern the working time of mobile workers in civil aviation. The relevant provisions of the 1993 directive will not therefore apply to mobile workers in this sector. Non-mobile workers in civil aviation will be covered by the working time directive, as recently amended.

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Footwear

The CEC and ETUF-TCL social partners of the footwear sector signed a sectoral code of conduct on 17 November 2000, in the framework of the European social dialogue committee.

The code of conduct covers trade union freedom, collective bargaining, the banning of discrimination in employment and of forced and child labour. It also includes follow-up and control procedures.

The Confederation of Shoe Retailers, CEDDEC, will also be signing the code in regard to retailing. Since 17 November 2000 all the fashion industry sectors have thus signed a code of practice (textile-clothing and tanning-leather, signed in 1997 and on 10 July 2000 respectively).

The footwear social partners have agreed to organise a sectoral economic and social forum in Prague.

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Horeca/tourism

Major progress was made at the meeting of 22 September 2000. An interesting debate was launched on the validation of qualifications on the basis of interventions by bodies specialised in this field.

It was decided to undertake a study of medium-term developments in the hotel and catering sector and to circulate a questionnaire on employment and training in the sector to all members of HOTREC (employers) and ECF-IUF (trade unions). A representative of the European Commission's DG Enterprise reported on the activities of the

four working groups set up in the tourism sector - and on the subject of training in particular.

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Postal services

The European round table on training was held in Brussels on 29 November last year.

The social partners (POSTEUROP and UNI) were able to study and exchange opinions on 25 cases of good practices (seven on employability, eight on training in the new technologies, six on adapting to change and four on methods and tools). In the light of the quantity of good practices reported and the quality of the exchanges, the social partners are planning to publish a compendium of the good practices analysed.

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Private security

The social partners (CoESS and UNI-Europa) are launching an innovative and ambitious project - the sector-wide dissemination of their joint declaration on mutual recognition and social dialogue.

At their Berlin conference in June 1999, CoESS and UNI-Europa signed a declaration on mutual recognition and social dialogue. A first for European social dialogue, this declaration was the result of intense dialogue and the relationship of mutual trust and respect progressively built-up between the two organisations.

In order for the declaration to now be implemented and acted upon, its content must first be made known. This project thus aims to disseminate as widely as possible both the content of the declaration and the principal results of European social dialogue among workers and firms in the private security sector in the European Union and a number of applicant countries (Slovenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Estonia and Cyprus).

A brochure will be published in the languages of the EU and the applicant countries concerned and circulated among the sector's firms and workers.

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Road transport

The European Commission gets support from the social partners in its fight against illegal employment practices.

On 15 September, the International Road Union (IRU) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) adopted a joint opinion to support the Commission in its attempts to introduce an effective EU measure to combat illegal employment practices and working conditions below EU standards.

The road transport sector - today by far the dominant transport mode - is facing serious problems. One of these is the unfair competition due to illegal employment practices, in particular the increasing number of international road haulage operators that employ drivers from third countries for transport operations within the European Union.

Such drivers may be employed under the employment conditions of their home country, where standards may be well below those in EU Member States. The legislative framework and the possibilities for its enforcement are not sufficient to combat this growing problem. In particular, existing lawful contract conditions and their enforcement are not effective when vehicles registered in one EU Member State operate on the territory of other Member States and are driven by drivers residing in a non-EU country, where wage costs and standards of social security are lower.

The use of third country drivers under social conditions well below those in EU Member States creates unfair competition, distorts the road transport market, encourages a lowering

of working conditions and wages as well as the risk of job losses for EU drivers. The support of the social partners is therefore very welcome. A Commission proposal on this issue is expected before the end of the year 2000.

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Telecommunications

The social partners in the Telecom sector met in Luxembourg on 19 September for a joint seminar on the qualifications and skills of workers in a sector experiencing rapid technological and economic change.

This seminar was the culmination of a project launched at the end of last year by the "Institut für Arbeit und Technik" which aimed to study the particular fields of activities of the telecommunications sector (in particular mobile telephony services and Internet access) so as to identify obstacles to realising the potential of full employment.

About 40 representatives of the trade unions (UNI-Europa Telecom) and employers (ETNO) openly discussed questions affecting the development of skills, work organisation and present shortages of skilled workers.

Detailed information on the seminar and its conclusions, as well as on the final report, can be obtained directly from the UNI-Europa Telecom site at:

[http://www.union-network.org/unitelec.com.nsf/Skills+Project+\(Public\)?OpenView](http://www.union-network.org/unitelec.com.nsf/Skills+Project+(Public)?OpenView) or, in German, from the Institut für Arbeit und Technik site at:
<http://iat-info.iatg.de/projekt/ps/analys.html>

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Textiles and clothing

The European social partners (Euratex and ETF-TCL) held a joint seminar on 28 and 29 September in Istanbul (Turkey) on the application of the sector's code of conduct and social dialogue in the context of EU enlargement and the integration of the acquis communautaire.

The seminar was organised in cooperation with Turkish employers' and workers' organisations in the presence of the European social partners,

the European Commission, the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Turkish authorities. This was the first event of its kind in Turkey. The European code of conduct, signed in 1997, covers freedom of association, collective bargaining, the banning of child and forced labour and non-discrimination in employment. The Turkish social partners confirmed their desire to promote the code's implementation in companies in the textiles and clothing sector. They also recognised the importance of strengthening social dialogue as part of the process of modernising the industry and work relations. According to data provided by the Turkish social partners, the sector employs more than 2 million workers and represents 40% of Turkey's exports.

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Wood

The second plenary meeting of the "Wood" social dialogue committee was held on 31 October 2000 in Brussels.

The sector's social partners (CEI-BOIS and EFBWW) set up an "Education and Vocational Training" working party. They also approved a code of conduct for the sector and held an exchange of opinions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights currently being prepared.

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The Employment and Social Affairs DG is currently revising its publications policy. This issue of the European Commission's "European Social Dialogue Newsletter" is therefore the last to be published in paper form. The Employment DG will, however, continue to publish this Newsletter on its Internet site: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-dial/social/index_en.htm

We would like to thank you for all the interest you have shown in our work in the past and hope very much that you will visit our Internet site to view future Newsletters.

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Newsletter from the European Commission
Employment and Social Affairs DG/D

■ **Published by:**
Employment and Social Affairs DG/D.2,
European Commission
Fax: (32-2) 299 24 66

■ The *European Social Dialogue* newsletter can be consulted on the Internet in the various language versions, at the following address:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-dial/social/index_en.htm